



State of California Seismic Safety Commission Winter/Spring 2001 Newsletter

Commission Submits Annual Report to Governor and Legislature

In January 2001, the Commission formally adopted the Annual Report which covers activities of the year 2000. Some of the highlights the report focused on was the Commission's 25th anniversary, the final report to Governor Davis on the Investigative Teams dispatched to Taiwan, Turkey and Greece, the Biennial URM Survey of California, and a synopsis of legislative bills in 2000.

Commission Participates in Field Trip and Meeting in Palm Desert, California

Palm Desert was the site of the Commission's January 11, 2001 hearing. The Commission received updates on seismic programs from representatives of San Bernardino County, Riverside County and the Coachella Valley Water District. An excellent presentation was also given from the Braille Institute, focusing on the latest solutions and obstacles facing sight-challenged people. The Commissioners and members of the public were treated to an educational field trip on January 10 by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California of the Water District's facilities.

New Commission Appointments

Governor Gray Davis appointed Mark M. Church, Lawrence T. Klein and Linden T. Nishinaga as new members of the Commission. Mr. Church, of Burlingame, is a San Mateo County Supervisor. Previously, he served as Mayor and City Councilman for the City of Millbrae and is a practicing attorney specializing in general civil litigation. Mr. Church represents local government on the Commission. Mr. Klein of San Francisco is the Assistant General Manager for Operations at the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, a position he has held since January 2000. Mr. Klein represents utilities on the Commission. Mr. Nishinaga of Redondo Beach is a civil engineer/project manager for the Port of Los Angeles, a position he has held since 1984. Mr. Nishinaga represents cities government on the Commission. All three commissioners' terms will expire in May of 2003. One vacancy remains on the Commission which is the Insurance representative.

The Commission Moves Forward with Revising the Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan

The Commission appointed subcommittees to revise the 11 elements of the State's Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan. The project manager, Mr. Harry Hallenbeck, was secured to oversee the revision of the Plan. With the assistance of Seismic Safety Commissioners, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, and outside stakeholders, the Commission is updating, deleting, and creating initiatives as needed. During March and April, the subcommittees met individually to update respective elements. The May 9 & 10 Workshop will be dedicated to the overview of those subcommittee meetings and the Commission is expected to have a final draft by the end of May 2001.

Seismic Gas Safety Valve Hearing Held and- Task Committee Formed

The Seismic Safety Commission held a hearing on October 12, 2000 to focus on policy issues surrounding earthquake activated gas shutoff valves. Gas shut-off valves are safety devices designed to reduce fire danger following major earthquakes. The Commission heard testimony from the Public Utilities Commission, the State Department of General Services, Pacific Gas & Electric Company, Southern California Gas Company, American Society of Civil Engineers, Representatives from the City of Los Angeles, and various valve manufacturers. Commission Chair Donald Manning stated that the hearing was interesting and informative and it enabled information to be gathered on the latest technology, benefits, problems, and public safety issues surrounding gas shut off valves. After the hearing, the Commission formed a special Seismic Gas Safety Task Committee to prepare information for consumers and governments for residential and small commercial applications. By the end of 2001, the committee will address a wide variety of risk management options including shake actuated valves and excess flow valves without necessarily advocating or discouraging any particular option. The Committee is chaired by Commissioner Stan Moy and meeting facilitation coming from the American Society of Civil Engineers and initial financial support from the Southern California Gas Company.

Meeting Dates for Remainder of 2001

May 9 & 10 - Sacramento
June 14 - Sacramento
July -12 - Location to be determined
August - no meeting
September 13 - Sacramento
October 11 - Location to be determined
November 8 - Sacramento
December 13 - no meeting

Newsletter Staff

Editor: Karen Cogan

Newsletter Contributors:

Richard McCarthy, Executive Director

Henry Sepulveda, Legislative Manager

Fred Turner, Senior Structural Engineer

Henry Reyes, Senior Engineer

Bob Anderson, Senior Geologist

How Safe are Public Storage Racks?

The Seismic Safety Commission held a hearing in San Francisco on April 12, 2001 to discuss the seismic safety of high storage racks. The Commission is aware that numerous warehouse stores throughout California are using high storage racks whereby building occupants may be exposed to falling hazards from contents on racks resulting from everyday operations or during earthquakes. Chairman Manning noted, "on a recent visit to a warehouse-style store, I noticed how high the storage was placed on pallets and that the contents of the pallets were unsecured, posing a significant hazard. I'm very concerned about this practice." Among those who gave testimony were representatives from Cal Osha, State Fire Marshal, EQE International, and public comments. Recently proposed legislation by Senators Alarcon and Spier call attention to rack safety issues. The Commission's focus was to gather information to further develop SB 629.

Legislative Update

For the 2001-02 Legislative session, the Commission is sponsoring seven legislative bills, from warehouse storage racks safety to schools earthquake preparedness. As of May 1, all the measures were well-received by the various legislative policy committees and proceeding smoothly toward enactment. Among the bills being promoted by the Commission:

SB 717 (Speier) authorizes the issuance of \$600 million in State G.O. bonds to support seismic retrofit of residences and local government facilities.

AB 724 (Corbett) encourages earthquake safety in schools by requiring that principals notify parents about the schools preparedness and plans for earthquake emergencies.

AB 1118 (Corbett) gives residential property owners a tax credit for certain retrofit construction.

SB 629 (Alarcon) orders the Commission to conduct a comprehensive study of the hazards posed to customers and workers by storage racks (and their contents) in seismically active areas of the State.

For More information, contact Henry Sepulveda,

Seismic Safety Commission
1755 Creekside Oaks Drive Suite 100
Sacramento CA 95833